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The Papers read were—

1. *Expedition up the Yang-tse-kiang.* By Lieutenant-Colonel SAREL, 17th Lancers, F.R.G.S.

THE party composing this expedition left Shanghai on February 11, 1861, with the intention of proceeding up the Yang-tse-kiang, crossing the province of Se-chuen to Lassa, and thence reaching India over the chain of the Himalayas. However, the first part of their intended journey was alone accomplished, as a state of rebellion and war in the far-west made it utterly impossible to procure boats, land-transport, or even attendants, further than Ping-shan, a small town situated a few miles beyond Su-chow, which itself is in N. lat. $28^{\circ} 46'$, E. long. $105^{\circ} 7'$.

The expedition consisted of Lieut.-Colonel Sarel, 17th Lancers; Captain Blakiston, R.A.; Dr. Barton; and the Rev. S. Schreschewsky, of the American mission. The official report of the journey by Lieut.-Colonel Sarel is printed as a Supplement to the 'Calcutta Gazette' of September 11, 1861; an elaborate chart of the river has been prepared by Captain Blakiston from his surveys; and collections of minerals, plants, and insects, have been despatched to England.

They started in company with the naval expedition under Sir Hope Grant, who steamed as far as Yo-chow. Here they were left on their own resources, and proceeded up stream in native boats.

The general features of the river above Shanghai are, that it is about 1000 yards wide, flowing through a flat country, with a depth of from 4 to 17 fathoms in main channel, and perfectly navigable as far as I-chang, N. lat. $30^{\circ} 41'$, E. long. $111^{\circ} 3'$. Here the river issues through a contracted channel in a mountainous country, and the boats of the lower Yang-tse do not ascend further. For 78 geographical miles, between I-chang and Quai-chow, the river is narrowed even to 150 yards, and is of great depth and swiftness; here and there rushing into rapids. Boats of 120 feet in length, are tracked up this part of its course with severe exertion, but float down with scant pilotage and without danger in mid-stream. After Quai-chow the river again becomes navigable, but less freely than in its lower course, for its stream is narrower and swifter, and its channel more obstructed with rocks; however there are rarely less than 8 fathoms in mid-channel. It receives the Ho-chow river, an important navigable tributary, at Chung-king, and two smaller ones further west, and ceases to be navigable for large vessels at Su-chow, though boats may ascend it further.

The river has an immense rise and fall, the difference between its extreme levels being 27 feet at Han-kow, where its breadth is fully a mile, and 50 feet in the neighbourhood of I-chang, where it is only a quarter of a mile broad. In the latter place it begins to rise about the beginning of April, continues rising till June, maintains its height till the end of September, and is at its lowest in December. The time of easiest navigation would be before the river has risen so high as to inundate its banks, and make its main-channel difficult to find.

The political state of the country became exceedingly unsettled from Quai-chow upwards. The English treaty was nowhere posted, and at one town it had not even been seen. The Prefect of Quai-chow called it the treaty of Prince Kung. At Su-chow the rebels were described as overrunning the neighbourhood, while headless bodies, with their hands tied behind their backs, floating at all hours down the stream, verified the Chinese statements. At Ping-shan, the furthest point reached by the expedition, there was an actual siege and night attack.

The rebels were not the Tai-pings, nor in any way connected with them. They were called "Tu-feh," or local robbers; there were also plundered peasantry, who took to robbing others for their own subsistence. The rebels were resisted by the inhabitants of the villages, who banded themselves together, and numerous troops had been despatched and were seen on their way against them.

As to the products of the country;—in addition to other crops, the poppy was largely cultivated above Quai-chow: for many miles it was the universal crop, and its quantity was such as might well interfere with a foreign market. There are numerous gold-washings, apparently very unproductive, for none but the commonest people were seen employed upon them. Coal is found in many places, but not of very good quality; it is small and dull-looking. The best coal, and also the most abundant district, is just above Su-chow, where it is quarried high up on the cliffs, and sent down to the river in baskets, sliding on stout bamboo ropes, one full basket pulling up an empty one. This coal could be boated down to Han-kow in twenty days, and to I-chang in ten.

Native Christians numbered from 2000 to 3000 at Chung-king, out of a population of 200,000, according to the account of the French missionaries who are established there. Besides the Christians, there are 500 Mussulman families.

The places which hold out the greatest inducement to Europeans to form trading stations, are I-chang and Chung-king. Steamers could reach I-chang with perfect ease, but thence the rapids and eddies

form an obstruction that would require some knowledge of the river, and boats built for the purpose, to surmount in safety.

No serious difficulty was experienced by the expedition on their way except at Chung-king, where the prefect was exceedingly disobliging, and the soldiers threatened to murder them. A bold bearing and show of resistance overcame all this, and the prefect's manner changed to great civility.

The CHAIRMAN said, that about two months ago he received the following letter from Sir H. Robinson, the Governor of Hong-Kong, forwarding the substance of a letter just received from one of the French missionary establishments in the interior of China:—

“ You will no doubt be glad to hear the latest accounts of Major Sarel and his party, who are trying to make their way to Calcutta (*viâ* Lassa) overland from Hankow : I therefore send you the substance of a letter just received here from Monseigneur Desflèches, Vicar-Apostolic of Eastern Sechuen, dated from Chung-king, 15th May last.

“ ‘ The English caravan (travelling party) arrived at Chung-king the 28th April. Monseigneur Desflèches was absent in the country. M. Vincot received them. On Tuesday (30th April) Monseigneur Desflèches returned, and invited them to dinner. The city was in such commotion, and its people, who had never seen Europeans in their costume before, were so threatening, that Dr. Barton and the other gentleman remained on board to guard their property, with the four sepoys ; and Major Sarel and Captain Blakiston accepted the Bishop's invitation. These gentlemen also saw the mandarins of the place, who at first refused, but afterwards granted them chairs (*des palanquins*). They carried on their boat the flag of an ambassador, being so directed by the authorities at Hankow. They left for Chingtu, the capital of the province, on the 4th or 5th May, expecting to reach the Himalayas about September or October. They were to travel by water to the capital, the land route swarming with rebels, and Monseigneur Desflèches had doubts of their making their way. M. Vincot gives a deplorable account of the state of Sechuen, and calculates the number of the rebels in those parts at over 300,000. The Government troops, he says, are as great ruffians as the rebels, and invariably finish the work of plunder that the latter have begun.

“ ‘ Monseigneur de Narula died in his flight before the rebels on the 6th May, aged 75 years, 42 of which were spent in China.’

“ These, I think, are the only points which would interest you in Monseigneur Desflèches' letter.

“ By the latest accounts from the Yangtse the navigation of that river has been rendered very difficult in consequence of the rapid rise ; the river having risen 36 feet at Hankow and 21 at Nanking. This, however, does not appear anything more than must be looked for every summer.”

These, continued the Chairman, were merely illustrations of the difficulties with which our travellers had to contend, and showed the reasons why they were compelled to abandon their adventurous expedition. They, however, had accomplished much, and the geographical and other information which they had obtained was very valuable. He knew the meeting would agree with him, when he said that the gentleman who had communicated the paper was entitled to their best thanks.
